

2011 WMBE Goals and Outreach Plan

City of Seattle Law Department

This plan is developed in response to the Equality in Contracting Ordinance (SMC 20.42) and Executive Order 2010-05.

Department Overview:

The Law Department serves as counsel to the City's elected officials and agencies, as well as the prosecutor in Seattle Municipal Court. The department provides legal advice to City officials to help them achieve their goals, represents the City in litigation and protects public health, safety and welfare by prosecuting violations of the City criminal and civil ordinances and state law. Due to the nature of the work of the Law Department, the budget is heavily weighted in the category of salaries and benefits, usually about 85%. Approximately 15% of remaining operating funds are available for purchases, programs, training, and other expenses.

Civil Division: The Civil Division provides legal counsel and representation to the City's elected and appointed policymakers in litigation at all levels of county, state and federal courts, as well as administrative agencies.

Criminal Division: The Criminal Division prosecutes crimes in Seattle Municipal Court, provides legal advice to City clients on criminal justice matters, monitors state criminal justice legislation of interest to the City, and participates in criminal justice policy development and management of the criminal justice system. This division operates a Victims of Crime program to assist crime victims in obtaining restitution and operates an active volunteer program through which students and citizens gain a better understanding of the criminal justice system.

Many of our purchases are related to the business of law and, as such, the vendors tend to be specialized and limited in number, such as publishers of law books, online databases and other research materials. Most of these resources are available from only one source. For example, our primary supplier of law books is a large, national publishing company which does not qualify as a WMBE vendor. However, whenever possible, the Law Department makes a conscious effort to review all vendor options. We will continue to expand our efforts when seeking professional services such as transcription services of court hearings, court reporters, and confidential document destruction.

After reviewing the Law Department's purchasing record on the WMBE Utilization Report for 2010, we discovered many vendors we used last year were not properly reflected in the totals. All are registered with the VCR system and verified as state-certified WMBE vendors. However, they do not appear on the utilization report. This is of concern. In reality, the Law Department WMBE vendor usage is substantially higher than documented. Without accurate accounting, it makes goal setting and reliable tracking significantly more difficult.

Blanket Contracts: This is the area where we are most likely to utilize WMBE vendors for such items as copying, printing, and office supplies. On an ongoing basis, we review new City contracts related to printing and utilize WMBE vendors whenever economically feasible.

Consulting Contracts: On occasion, the Law Department utilizes legal consultants or outside counsel to provide expertise related to various specialty areas or when it is deemed necessary to seek an opinion outside of the City. However, many attorneys who may be considered an expert on a specific topic or in a particular area of law are employed by large law firms and therefore not included within the WMBE parameters. For example, in 2010, the department specifically hired a minority attorney with expertise in a particular area of employment law. Although the attorney himself was a minority, the firm he worked for did not qualify as a WMBE firm.

Goals: In 2010, budget cuts forced major reductions in all areas of spending. According to the utilization report, our WMBE expenditures in 2010 were 5.82% of total payments in the Law Department. These vendors were women-owned businesses (5.36%) and Hispanic-owned (.46%).

Our goal for 2011 will be to increase our WMBE utilization to 12% and broaden our WMBE vendor utilization to include African-American-owned and Asian-owned businesses. Our targets in 2011 are based primarily on projected expenditures for office supplies, including computer-related products, and furniture.

Training: In 2011, the Criminal Division will be hiring a new office manager. This position is responsible for ordering all office supplies, including printed materials, toner, and furniture for the division. The Law Department Administrator will provide the office manager with all tools and resources necessary to make informed purchasing decisions related to the WMBE program. In addition, we will provide staff with the tools to search the City databases for WMBE businesses and blanket contract vendors.

Strategies and actions: The most likely area of focus is in the area of office supplies, where we have several excellent WMBE vendors. Action items for 2011 are:

- Raise WMBE vendor utilization to 12% in 2011
- Increase usage of African-American and Asian-American owned businesses
- Train staff in accessing WMBE businesses and blanket vendors
- Work with vendors to ensure they are properly registered in the VCR system